

[4910-13]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

Commercial Routes for the Grand Canyon National Park

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of availability on routes in Grand Canyon National Park; comment request.

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of and requests comments on proposed commercial routes for the Grand Canyon National Park (GCNP) Special Flight Rules Area (SFRA). The proposed commercial routes are not being published in the Federal Register because they are depicted on large and very detailed charts that would be difficult to read if published in the Federal Register. The proposed modifications of certain commercial routes may require airspace changes in the GNCP SFRA that are contained in a notice of proposed rulemaking being published concurrently in this Federal Register. The proposed airspace modification and the planned modification to the route structure support the National Park Service mandate to provide for the substantial restoration of the natural quiet and experience of the park.

DATES: Comments on the routes must be received on or before September 7, 1999.

ADDRESSES:

Comments on the proposed routes, in triplicate, may be delivered or mailed to: Federal Aviation Administration, ATTN: Alberta Brown, Air Transportation Division, AFS-200, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591, Telephone (202) 267-8321. Comments may be examined at the above address between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays, except for Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Gary Davis, Air Transportation Division, AFS-200, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591, Telephone (202) 267-8166.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The proposed commercial routes are not being published in the Federal Register because they are on very large and detailed charts that would not publish well in the Federal Register. A copy of the chart depicting the routes may be obtained by contacting Denise Cashmere at (202) 267-3717, by faxing a request to (202) 267-5229, or by sending a request in writing to the Federal Aviation Administration, Air Transportation Division, AFS-200, 800 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591.

Comments Invited:

Interested persons are invited to comment on the proposed routes by submitting such written data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Commenters must identify that they are commenting on the proposed commercial routes for the GCNP SFRA. All comments received on or before the end of the comment period will be considered by the FAA before finalizing the commercial routes. Late filed comments will be considered to the extent practicable.

Discussion

The FAA, in consultation with the National Park Service (NPS), proposes to restore and modify certain commercial routes in the GCNP SFRA. The proposed modified routes were developed based on airspace configurations, safety considerations, the goal of substantial restoration of natural quiet in the GCNP, economic considerations, consultation with Native American tribes, and comments received in response to previous route proposals. The FAA, in consultation with the NPS, also proposes to modify the existing airspace in the SFRA to accommodate these proposed route changes in a companion notice of proposed rulemaking published elsewhere in this Federal Register.

In developing the proposed modified routes for GCNP, the FAA has been consulting with Native American tribes, on

a government-to-government basis, as required by the Presidential Memorandum on Government-to-Government Consultation with Native American Tribal Governments to assess potential effects on tribal trust resources and to assure that tribal government rights and concerns are considered in the decisionmaking process. The FAA has also been consulting with these tribes pursuant to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act concerning potential effects of the proposed routes on sacred sites. In addition, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act the FAA, has been consulting with these tribes, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and other interested parties concerning potential effects on historic sites, including traditional cultural properties and Native American sacred sites.

This action provides interested persons an opportunity to comment on the proposed commercial routes. Before the commercial routes for GCNP are finalized, FAA and NPS will fulfill their consultation responsibilities. In this consultation process, the FAA in coordination with NPS, will continue to consider feasible actions to mitigate any identified significant impacts to Native American cultural, religious, or historic sites.

General Description of the Modified Routes

The FAA proposes to rename the Blue Direct route as Blue Direct North and restore and modify the Blue Direct South, the Blue 2, and the Green 4 routes, as appropriate. Commenters should also note that the chart depicts proposed modifications to the Desert View, Bright Angel, and Sanup Flight-free Zones and the Zuni Point corridor.

These proposed routes have been developed after consideration of various alternative routes by the FAA and NPS. The FAA and NPS believe that the proposed routes best address preservation issues and Native American concerns. The proposal also continues to provide routes for commercial tour operators that mitigate noise impacts and provide the public with the requisite level of safety. The FAA believes that the routes depicted on the chart made available by this notice, would provide an opportunity for commercial air tours as well as assist the NPS in achieving its statutory mandate to provide for the substantial restoration of natural quiet in GCNP.

Environmental Review

The FAA is preparing a draft environmental assessment (EA) for this proposed action to ensure conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Copies of the draft EA will be circulated to interested parties and placed in the docket, where it will be available for review.

Issued in Washington, DC on July 1, 1999.

/s/ L. Nicholas Lacey

Director, Flight Standards Service